

**Testimony to
House Education Committee**

May 11, 2011

From

Todd Beard, teacher

International Academy of Flint

Good morning Chairman Scott and members of the Committee, my name is Todd Beard and I **inspire** Kindergarteners through 12th graders at the International Academy of Flint. I am a proud technology teacher at a successful charter school. This is my tenth year working in our public schools and my fifth year as a certified teacher.

I appear before you to attest to one of the grave injustices occurring in our public schools. While I understand the origins of teacher tenure laws, I cannot pretend that the benefits outweigh the costs to a quality education for our students.

As a teacher at a public charter school, I have no union. But, as a member of the educational profession and the middle class, I believe unions and other organizations that unite people with a common goal have and will continue to shape our society for the better. I want to be perfectly clear that I am not against unions, collective bargaining, fair compensation or great teachers working as long as they desire. Instead, what I am against is an antiquated practice of laying-off teachers based solely on seniority.

I am here to speak for the students of my generation against current tenure laws. When I say students of my generation, I am speaking about teachers of all ages. Maybe they returned to school to start a new career later in life. Maybe they have retired from their first career and gone back to the classroom to influence the next generation. My point is that this issue is not the young versus the old. Instead the issue is the “have’s”

versus the “have nots”, and the underlining issue is: evaluation based solely on seniority does not assure quality education. Many of my fellow educators are too scared to voice their opinions on this unfair practice for fear of resentment or persecution by their colleagues that do have sufficient seniority. But, I am here for them because a great teacher taught me to never be afraid to tell the truth.

This practice can no longer drive our educational system. As teachers, we do not evaluate our students on just one aspect of a subject. We do not throw out every homework assignment, quiz, and test, and evaluate our students based exclusively on how long they have been a student in class. Quality must be examined using the holistic approach. At my school, I am evaluated based on measurable data. I earn my position and my salary increase by having a positive impact on the quality of education my students receive. I make a difference in the lives of children, and I earn that opportunity everyday of every year.

It is my hope that new legislation will not take seniority out of the equation. Instead, I hope that in the debates to come that seniority becomes a part of the solution, but only when combined with other aspects that create quality educators such as; effectiveness, student outcomes, commitment, teamwork, continuing education, and effort.

How can we expect students to meet our higher standards, when teachers are not also being held to higher standards? We need reforms that put students first!!

Thank you for your time and consideration.